

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
AND SCRUTINY SUB-
COMMITTEES**

Date of Meeting:	7 th October 2014
Subject:	Children and Families Self Assessment
Responsible Officer:	Chris Spencer (Director of Children's Services)
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Councillor Lynda Seymour, Policy Lead for Children and Families Councillor Janet Mote, Performance Lead for Children and Families
Exempt:	No
Wards affected:	N/A
Enclosures:	Children & Families Self Assessment 2014

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1. Scrutiny members requested an update on Children and Families performance. The self assessment provides a broad overview of practice and provision and its impact on outcomes. It also provides important evidence to be considered as part of the Ofsted inspection of services for children
- 1.2. This report is for information and is presented for the Committee's consideration and comment and in preparation for an Ofsted inspection which involves the Council as a whole.

Section 2 – Report

- 2.1 The new Ofsted performance framework for social care and related services came into being in 2013 and presents a significantly harder test for local authorities and local partners. It sets out how inspectors will make judgements about children’s services in Harrow. There are 3 key judgements:
- The experience and progress of children who need help and protection
 - The experience and progress of children who are looked after and achieving permanence
 - Leadership, management and governance
- 2.2. The third of these areas, leadership and governance is particularly pertinent to senior officers and members of the Council. In detail it considers whether:

Leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance and together establish an effective strategy and good-quality services for children, young people and their families. There is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services delivered by a suitably qualified and experienced workforce that meets the needs of local children and young people and families. The Director of Children’s Services (DCS), the lead elected member and the senior management team have a comprehensive knowledge about what is happening at the ‘front line’ to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively. They know and understand the difference that help, care and protection are making. They oversee systematic performance management and monitoring that demonstrate rigorous and timely action in response to service deficiencies or new demands. The local authority works with partners to deliver early help, protect children and young people, improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for the children looked after and care leavers. It acts as a strong and effective corporate parent for children looked after and those leaving or who have left care. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so that the local authority is consistently effective as the lead agency for the protection and care of children and young people and as a corporate parent. Partnerships are supported by transparent and rigorous governance between the local authority and key statutory, private and voluntary organisations. Shared priorities are clear and resourced. There is effective engagement with the relevant local partnerships including the Health and Well-being Board. The DCS works closely with the LSCB chair and the chief executive holds the LSCB chair to account for the effectiveness of the LSCB.

- 2.3. Within this overall judgement 4 criteria are particularly pertinent to the work of the Council as a whole:

Grade Descriptor 3.1: Local authority senior managers, leaders and elected members discharge their individual and collective statutory responsibilities. There are clear lines of accountability and governance with a clear distinction between political, strategic and operational roles. Leaders, including elected members and managers, have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is happening at the 'front line' and how well children/young people are helped, cared for and protected.

Grade Descriptor 3.4: The local authority is an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and young people it looks after well. It is an effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning) and an ambitious corporate parent, ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed. It actively challenges and engages partners where appropriate to support children and young people, such as engaging the local authority strategic housing function.

Grade Descriptor 3.6: The local authority, through performance management and monitoring, has an accurate and systematically updated understanding of its effectiveness. It demonstrates a track record of dealing rigorously and effectively with areas for development. Leaders, including elected members and managers, have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is happening at the 'front line' and a track record of responding appropriately and quickly to service deficiencies or new demands.

Grade Descriptor 3.8: The local authority knows itself well, is a learning organisation and can demonstrate Evidence of Practice and Provision that is informed, modified and sustainably improved by feedback, research and intelligence about the quality of services and the experiences of children, young people and families who use them. This may, for example, include feedback from the children in care council, change that arises from complaints that children and families make about their experiences or from successful or disrupted placements or adoption breakdown.

- 2.4. Children and Families have drawn together a self assessment document which is work in progress. The self assessment has been carried out against the inspection framework and each criterion within the evaluation schedule. This detailed self assessment has provided the opportunity to identify "next steps" to be taken to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.5. The next steps included within the self assessment document are being used to revise the Strategic Plan for Children and Families which will include a clear set of targets for improvement. All senior and middle managers have contributed to the self assessment and strategic planning process.

Financial Implications

Savings in Children and Families are currently being considered as part of the Council's MTFS and some of the proposals could have an adverse effect on the Council's ability to deliver services and provision to the most vulnerable children and young people.

Performance Issues

Integral to the report.

Environmental Impact

None

Risk Management Implications

No new implications. Risks relating to poor performance and inspections are already included in the C&F risk register and are reviewed and updated each quarter.

Equalities implications

None

Council Priorities

The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

This self assessment is relevant to the following priorities:

- Making a difference for the vulnerable
- Making a difference for communities
- Making a difference for families

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

This report is for information and does not require statutory officer clearance

Ward Councillors notified:

N/A

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Farzana Aldridge, Head of Service School Improvement, 020 8736 6520

Background Papers: Self Assessment as at 29th September 2014